


# Landscape resistance mediates native fish species distribution shifts and vulnerability to climate change in riverscapes

Michael T. LeMoine<sup>1,2</sup>  | Lisa A. Eby<sup>1</sup> | Chris G. Clancy<sup>3</sup> | Leslie G. Nyce<sup>3</sup> | Michael J. Jakober<sup>4</sup> | Dan J. Isaak<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Wildlife Biology Program, University of Montana, Missoula, MT, USA

<sup>2</sup>Skagit River Systems Cooperative, La Conner, WA, USA

<sup>3</sup>Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks, Hamilton, MT, USA

<sup>4</sup>Bitterroot National Forest, Hamilton, MT, USA

<sup>5</sup>Rocky Mountain Research Station, USDA Forest Service, Boise, ID, USA

## Correspondence

Michael T. LeMoine, Skagit River Systems Cooperative, P.O. Box 368, La Conner, WA 98257-0368, USA.

Email: mlemoine@skagitcoop.org

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## Abstract

A broader understanding of how landscape resistance influences climate change vulnerability for many species is needed, as is an understanding of how barriers to dispersal may impact vulnerability. Freshwater biodiversity is at particular risk, but previous studies have focused on popular cold-water fishes (e.g., salmon, trout, and char) with relatively large body sizes and mobility. Those fishes may be able to track habitat change more adeptly than less mobile species. Smaller, less mobile fishes are rarely represented in studies demonstrating effects of climate change, but depending on their thermal tolerance, they may be particularly vulnerable to environmental change. By revisiting 280 sites over a 20 year interval throughout a warming riverscape, we described changes in occupancy (i.e., site extirpation and colonization probabilities) and assessed the environmental conditions associated with those changes for four fishes spanning a range of body sizes, thermal and habitat preferences. Two larger-bodied trout species exhibited small changes in site occupancy, with bull trout experiencing a 9.2% (95% CI = 8.3%–10.1%) reduction, mostly in warmer stream reaches, and westslope cutthroat trout experiencing a nonsignificant 1% increase. The small-bodied cool water slimy sculpin was originally distributed broadly throughout the network and experienced a 48.0% (95% CI = 42.0%–54.0%) reduction in site occupancy with declines common in warmer stream reaches and areas subject to wildfire disturbances. The small-bodied comparatively warmer water longnose dace primarily occupied larger streams and increased its occurrence in the lower portions of connected tributaries during the study period. Distribution shifts for sculpin and dace were significantly constrained by barriers, which included anthropogenic water diversions, natural step-pools and cascades in steeper upstream reaches. Our results suggest that aquatic communities exhibit a range of responses to climate change, and that improving passage and fluvial connectivity will be important climate adaptation tactics for conserving aquatic biodiversity.

## KEYWORDS

barriers, climate change, fish, mobility, stream warming, temperature

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Climate change is becoming one of the greatest drivers of global biodiversity loss (e.g., Bálint et al., 2011; Sala et al., 2000; Thomas et al., 2004; Valtonen et al., 2017), with widely documented impacts on species' phenology and physiology influencing ranges (Parmesan, 2006). Commonly observed are shifts in species distributions poleward and toward higher elevations as surface temperatures and precipitation regimes change (Alofs, Jackson, & Lester, 2014; Lenoir, Gégout, Marquet, De Ruffray, & Brisse, 2008; Parmesan & Yohe, 2003). Species that are able to disperse efficiently and have access to suitable habitats may be able to track shifting conditions but climate tracking for many species will be difficult when one or both of these factors is restrictive (Carroll, Parks, Dobrowski, & Roberts, 2018; Parmesan & Yohe, 2003; Schloss, Nuñez, & Lawler, 2012). Bioclimatic envelope models aid in conservation planning by predicting future species distributions at broad spatial extents but often lack the resolution to make precise local projections or omit important ecological processes that may contribute to differential species responses (Angert et al., 2011; Chen, Hill, Ohlemuller, Roy, & Thomas, 2011; Millar, Westfall, Delany, King, & Graumlich, 2004; Tingley, Koo, Moritz, Rush, & Beissinger, 2012). Improving the ability to represent climatic conditions at ecologically relevant scales has long been an area of active research (Hijmans, Cameron, Parra, Jones, & Jarvis, 2005; Potter, Woods, & Pincebourde, 2013) but more recently, the important roles of species traits and landscape resistance have risen to prominence (Foden et al., 2013). Traits that contribute to a species climate vulnerability may include niche breadth, body size, dispersal abilities, diversity of life history types, generation times and initial range size (Comte, Muriene, & Grenouillet, 2014; Foden et al., 2013; Pacifici et al., 2015). Landscape resistance arises from the interaction of species' traits with the physical configuration of potential habitats, the matrix surrounding habitats, and the distributions and behaviors of competitor species that may interfere with target conservation species (MacLean & Beissinger, 2017; McGuire, Lawler, McRae, Nuñez, & Theobald, 2016; Zeller, McGarigal, & Whiteley, 2012). Understanding the nuances inherent to species distribution shifts will be critical for informing management decisions, such as facilitating dispersal or habitat enhancement (Mawdsley, O'Malley, & Ojima, 2009).

Riverine ecosystems host significant portions of Earth's biodiversity (Altermatt, 2013; Dudgeon et al., 2006) and may be especially vulnerable to climate change given communities that are composed of ectothermic organisms, which inhabit linear dendritic networks that are easily fragmented by natural barriers (e.g., waterfalls, reaches with subsurface flows) or anthropogenic barriers (e.g., dams, water diversions, road culverts). This fragmentation may alter species' ability to track climate changes and persist. Although extensive literature describes the potential climate vulnerabilities of species in river networks, it focuses disproportionately on a relatively small number of popular salmon, trout, and

char species that have cold thermal niches, are large-bodied, and often highly mobile (Heino, Virkkala, & Toivonen, 2009; Lynch et al., 2016). Moreover, many of those cold-water species are capable of inhabiting steep mountain headwater streams where climate velocities and the rate of thermal habitat shifts are slow compared to lowland streams and rivers (Isaak et al., 2016). Mid- to low-elevation areas are where aquatic biodiversity is usually greatest due to the downstream accumulation of species in more benign and productive environments (Isaak, Wenger, Peterson, et al., 2017; Rahel & Hubert, 1991) and are where human populations and habitat alterations are usually most prevalent (Haidvogel et al., 2014; Wohl, Lininger, & Baron, 2017). As a result, an important mismatch occurs between current climate risk assessments for riverine species, the degree to which lotic community members may be affected by environmental change, and our understanding of the resilience of these communities.

Empirical case histories describing historical distribution shifts related to climate change are common for many terrestrial and marine taxa and constitute a strong basis for the concerns around global biodiversity loss (Thuiller, Lavore, Araújo, Sykes, & Prentice, 2005; Tittensor et al., 2010). The most robust and convincing assessments involve at least two thorough inventories of the same set of sites separated by a timespan sufficient for environmental change, and establish important baseline datasets for ongoing study (e.g., Grinnell & Storer, 1924; Moritz et al., 2008). With few exceptions such case histories are relatively rare for riverine fishes and often complicated by instream barriers (but see, Comte & Grenouillet, 2013; Eby, Helmy, Holsinger, & Young, 2014; Hari, Livingstone, Siber, Burkhardt-Holm, & Guettinger, 2006). Here we repeated an extensive late 20th century inventory of fish species occupancy throughout a thermally diverse riverscape where warming trends in recent decades were apparent. We compared changes in site occupancy between two periods, 1993–1995 and 2011–2013, for four fish species using dynamic occupancy models (MacKenzie, Nichols, Hines, Knutson, & Franklin, 2003; Popescu, De Valpine, Tempel, & Peery, 2012). The four fish species were selected from the native species pool because they were ubiquitous in the basin to ensure adequate sample sites for trend detection. They also have differences in thermal requirements, body sizes, and dispersal abilities. Initial species distributions and changes in site occupancy between the two surveys were linked to a suite of covariates describing local stream habitats, barriers, climatic, and disturbance conditions. We hypothesized that site occupancy of the four species would change most noticeably near the margins of thermal niches (i.e., warmest or coldest sites) and that the changes would be mediated by thermal requirements and local habitat conditions. Additionally, we hypothesized that colonization rates and climate tracking ability of smaller-bodied, weak-swimming fish would be relatively low and limited by instream habitat barriers compared to larger-bodied salmonid species. Finally, we examined scenarios to assess the potential benefits of reducing fragmentation by removing barriers to facilitate dispersal as a conservation strategy.

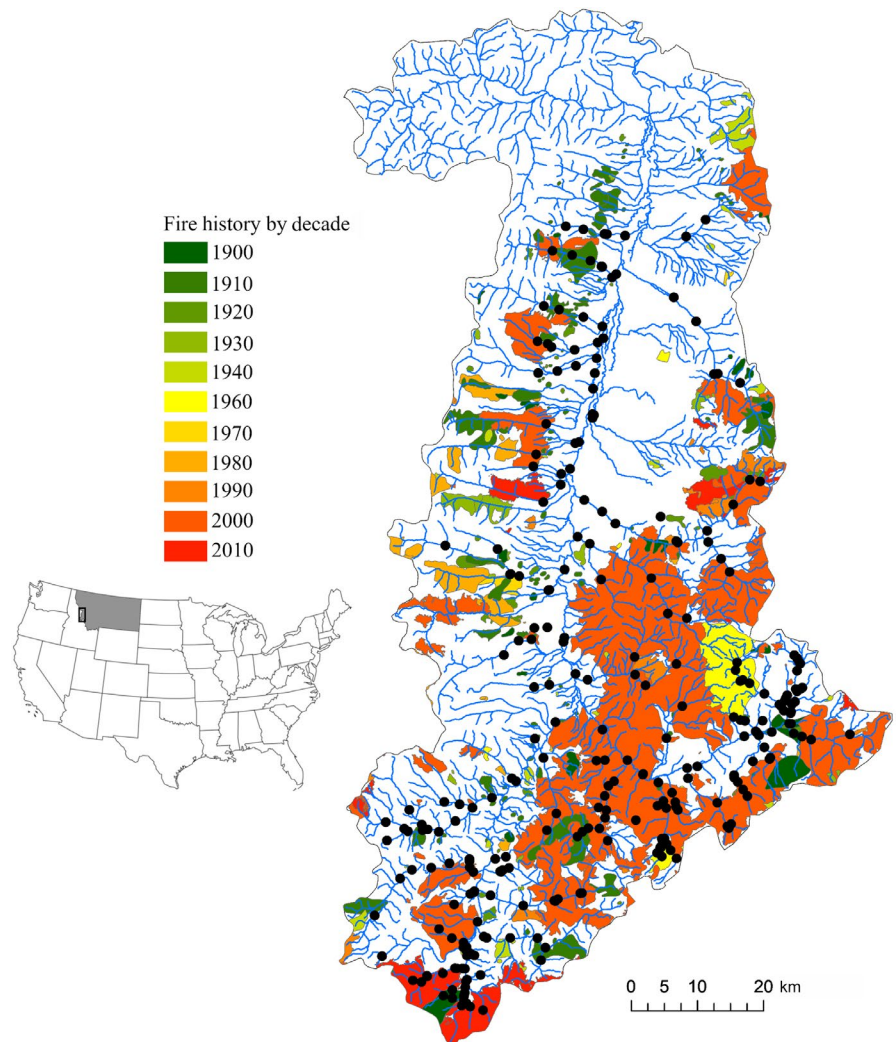
## 2 | MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1 | Study area and dataset

The Bitterroot basin is a 7,394 km<sup>2</sup> snowmelt runoff-dominated watershed with elevations ranging from 945 to 3,048 m and complex mountain topography surrounding a flat, wide main valley located in western Montana, USA (Figure 1). A relatively small human population occupies the basin and is concentrated on privately owned lands in a few towns and ranches at low elevations along the stream and river valleys. Water extraction for pastoral purposes is common on private lands and diversion structures sometimes block fish passage in smaller streams. Higher elevation lands throughout the remainder of the basin are publicly owned and administered by the U.S. Forest Service for a variety of land use, conservation, and management goals. Long-term monitoring records from weather stations in western Montana and throughout the broader region indicate that air temperatures have increased by approximately 1°C during the last 40 years (Littell et al., 2011; Pederson, Graumlich, Fagre, Kipfer, & Muhlfeld, 2010). This warming has affected the regional hydroclimate of rivers and streams, with well documented trends towards reduced snow pack (Mote, Li,

Lettenmaier, Xiao, & Engel, 2018), earlier snowmelt runoff (Hamlet, Mote, Clark, & Lettenmaier, 2007; Stewart, 2009), lower summer flows (Leppi, DeLuca, Harrar, & Running, 2012; Luce & Holden, 2009), and water temperature warming rates of 0.2–0.3°C per decade during the summer and fall seasons (Isaak et al., 2018). Wildfire activity within the Bitterroot basin and regionally has also increased substantially (Figure 1; Morgan, Hardy, Swetnam, Rollins, & Long, 2001), which enhances water temperature increases in some stream reaches by 1.4–2.0°C above background trends (Holsinger, Keane, Isaak, Eby, & Young, 2014; Mahlum, Eby, Young, Clancy, & Jakober, 2011) and can create episodic inputs of sediment and coarse woody debris (e.g., Burton, 2005; Rhoades, Entwistle, & Butler, 2011).

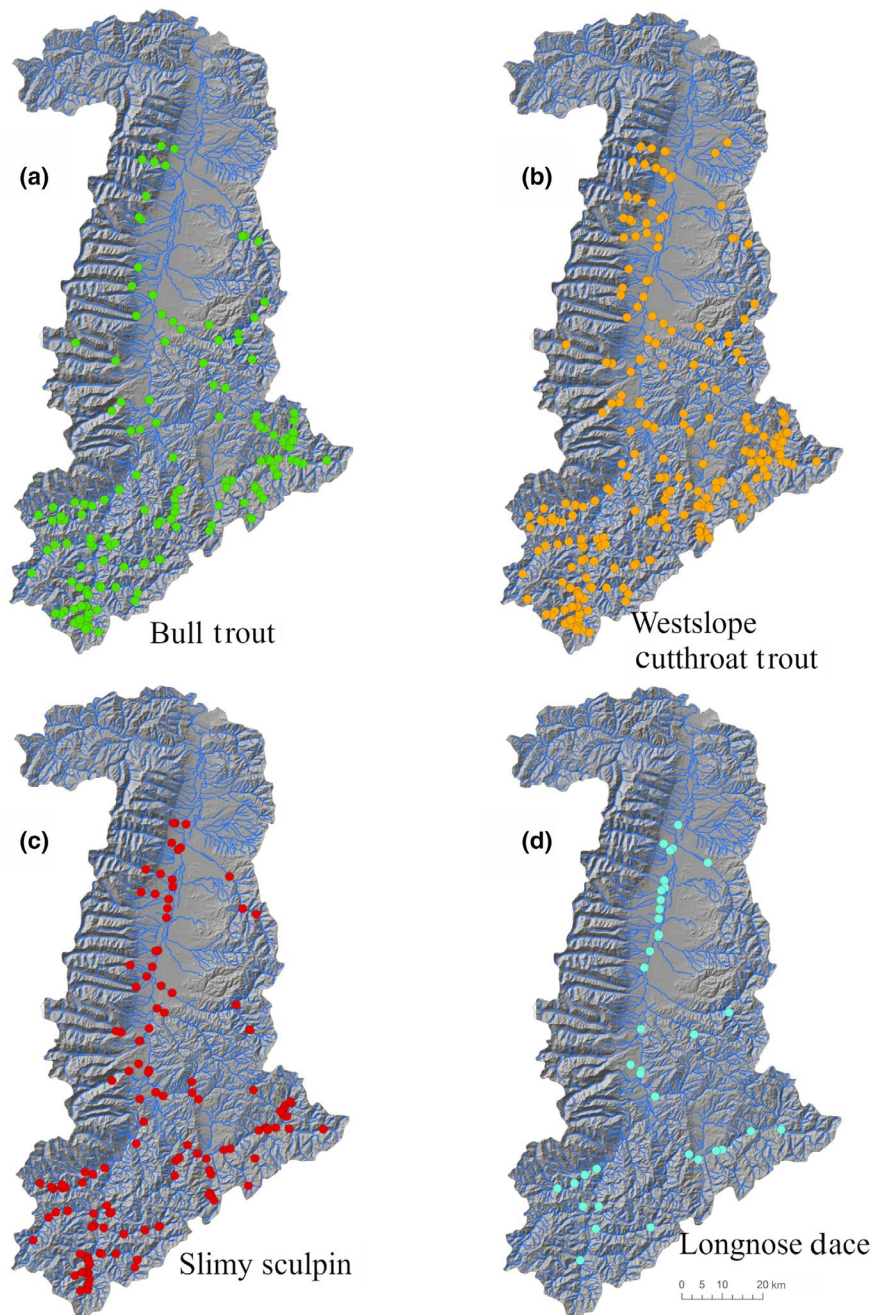
The ichthyofauna in the Bitterroot basin consists of bull trout (*Salvelinus confluentus*), westslope cutthroat trout (*Oncorhynchus clarkii lewisi*), nonnative eastern brook trout (*S. fontinalis*), nonnative rainbow trout (*O. mykiss*), nonnative brown trout (*Salmo trutta*), mountain whitefish (*Prosopium williamsoni*), large scale sucker (*Catostomus macrocheilus*), longnose sucker (*C. catostomus*), slimy sculpin (*Cottus cognatus*) and longnose dace (*Rhinichthys catarractae*). For our analyses, we selected four native species (bull trout, cutthroat trout, longnose dace, and slimy sculpin) that had



**FIGURE 1** Sampling locations ( $n = 280$ ) that were initially visited in 1993–1995 and resampled in 2011–2013 in the Bitterroot River watershed of western Montana, U.S.A. Colored polygons represent wildfire perimeters during the past century. Severe fires occurred in 2000 and 2004 that resulted in major portions of the basin being burned

historically reliable data and were broadly detected across the basin during the early survey period (Figure 2). These species also had different thermal preferences and body sizes. Body size often associates with vagility and should also relate to climate tracking ability (Albanese, Angermeier, & Peterson, 2009). The three other native fish (mountain whitefish, longnose sucker, and largescale sucker) were not regularly netted and reported by the sampling crews over these time periods resulting in less consistent and reliable historical data. We detected them at less than 15% of the sites. Bull trout has the coldest thermal niche of the four species and occurs in abundance only in the coldest headwater streams where summer temperatures are  $<12^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Isaak, Wenger, & Young, 2017; Selong, McMahon, Zale, & Barrows, 2001). Adult bull trout often

attain large sizes (e.g.,  $>300$  mm) and will seasonally use warm river environments (Howell, Dunham, & Sankovich, 2010), but always migrate to cold headwaters for spawning where juveniles reside and grow for several years (e.g., Fraley & Shepard, 1989; Isaak, Wenger, & Young, 2017; Rieman & McIntyre, 1995). Westslope cutthroat trout also has a cool thermal niche, though one that is not quite as restrictive as bull trout (Bear, McMahon, & Zale, 2007; Isaak, Young, Nagel, Horan, & Groce, 2015), and adults attain large body sizes ( $>250$  mm) and may exhibit either seasonal spawning migrations or headwater resident life history strategies (Shepard, Sanborn, Ulmer, & Lee, 1997). Slimy sculpin is a small-bodied ( $<140$  mm) benthic fish that has a cool thermal niche and occupies summer temperatures of  $13\text{--}16^{\circ}\text{C}$



**FIGURE 2** Raw detections of (a) bull trout, (b) westslope cutthroat trout, (c) slimy sculpin, and (d) longnose dace in the 1993–1995 dataset



(Adams, Schmetterling, & Neely, 2015; Isaak, Wenger, & Young, 2017). Longnose dace is also small-bodied (<200 mm) and has a comparatively warmer thermal niche, becoming common only where summer temperatures consistently exceed 15°C (Isaak, Wenger, & Young, 2017; Lyons et al., 2009). There is little information on movements of the small-bodied species, but neither of the smaller-bodied species is known to make extensive seasonal migrations (but for sculpin see Schmetterling & Adams, 2004).

Fish community surveys at 280 sites across 81 streams from 1993 to 1995 (Supplemental Materials S1 for full dataset) originally conducted by Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks (MFWP) and United States Forest Service (USFS) fish biologists were repeated from 2011 to 2013 using the same sampling techniques. Sites were spread throughout the stream network and were located with the help of the same biologists to within 100–200 m across sampling periods (Figure 1). Sampling was done during the late summer when stream flows were lowest and capture efficiencies highest by stunning and netting fish using a backpack-mounted electrofishing unit within small, first through third order streams, and a boat-mounted electrofishing unit in fourth and fifth order streams. Sites were defined as being approximately 10 channel geomorphic units in length (Hawkins et al., 1993) and sites were surveyed one to six times within each of the time periods (e.g., 1993–1995 and 2011–2013). Seventy-seven percent of the sites had at least two visits within each of the time periods and 33% of the sites had three or more visits within each time period providing a robust dataset for estimating probability of detection. Captured fish were identified to species, measured, and enumerated before being released back into streams near their capture sites. Collection and handling procedures were performed in accordance with guidelines specified under scientific collection permits issued to MFWP, USFS, and Michael LeMoine and Lisa Eby by MFWP and protocols approved by the University of Montana Institutional Animal Care and Use Committee (AUP 022-11). Also recorded during the surveys were the amount of sampling effort, stream width, crew members, and gear type for consideration as factors affecting species detectability in the dynamic occupancy modeling framework discussed below (MacKenzie et al., 2003).

## 2.2 | Habitat covariates

We identified covariates associated with climate, watershed characteristics, and indicators of disturbance that have been shown to potentially affect distributions of stream fishes (Table 1). As with other freshwater fish distribution studies (e.g., Buisson, Thuiller, Lek, Lim, & Grenouillet, 2008; Comte, Buisson, Daufresne, & Grenouillet, 2013; Hari et al., 2006; Rieman et al., 2007; Wenger et al., 2011) our climate variables were associated with indicators of summertime water temperatures (August mean temperature) and stream flows (May snowpack). Our watershed characteristics included reach gradient at site (averaged over 1 km), drainage area, and riparian canopy cover. Stream gradient influences water velocities impacting a fish's ability

to maintain position and energetic costs, and influences other habitat characteristics including substrate size and pool to riffle ratios. Drainage area is a surrogate for stream size that influences site habitat characteristics, such as habitat volume, stream width and depth, and substrate size which also predicts occupancy of these species (Comte & Grenouillet, 2013; Wenger et al., 2011). Greater riparian canopy cover is associated with riparian vegetation, cover and shade (Isaak et al., 2010; Wenger et al., 2011).

Finally, we assessed three disturbance covariates (% watershed burned, road density, and downstream barriers) based relationships described in previous research. Riparian burns are a well-known disturbance on the landscape that can increase stream temperature (Mahlum et al., 2011) and influence fish distributions directly or indirectly through increased stream temperatures through loss of canopy cover that may limit fish presence (Isaak et al., 2010; Rieman et al., 2007). We used road density (km of road miles/km<sup>2</sup> of watershed area) above each site to represent potential sediment inputs (Arnold & Gibbons, 1996).

We defined characteristics of potential natural (cascades and waterfalls) and anthropogenic (culverts, diversion dams) barriers using published literature and governmental reports for each species (westslope cutthroat trout and bull trout: Behlke, Kane, McLean, & Travis, 1991; Bell, Delacy, Paulik, Bruya, & Scott, 1981; Reiser & Peacock, 1995; WDFW, 2009; sculpin: Adams et al., 2015; LeMoine & Bodensteiner, 2014; Utzinger, Roth, & Peter, 1998; see Figure S1). Description of barriers to longnose dace passage are nonexistent, but a body size similar to sculpin suggests they have similar passage requirements (Nislow, Hudy, Letcher, & Smith, 2011). Potential barriers to fish movements were assessed across the Bitterroot basin through reach scale measurements of stream slope using digital elevation models, as well as traversing streams at summer base flow and collecting key characteristics such as, stream bed slope, jump height required to surmount the potential barrier and valley confinement. As downstream stream reaches warm, we expected fish to move upstream into higher elevation, cooler waters. Barriers that reside downstream of a sampling site could impede fish from moving upstream to higher elevations with cooler stream temperatures, thus hindering climate tracking.

## 2.3 | Occupancy model

Because large adult bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout are seasonally migratory, their occurrence within a reach is not necessarily indicative of residence and therefore site occupancy. For the purposes of our study, we defined site occupancy based on the presence of juvenile and subadult trout <250 mm in length to ensure trout were established in the sampling reach. For bull trout this resulted in eight site occurrences where the capture of bull trout was discounted because only a single large trout >250 mm was captured and smaller bull trout were absent. No similar instances occurred for westslope cutthroat trout because smaller individuals were always present when a large trout was captured

**TABLE 1** Descriptive summary statistics of habitat covariates for occupancy, extirpation and colonization for the 280 stream sites in the analyses and the reference for the dataset. Period 1 runs from 1993 to 1995 and period 2 runs from 2011 to 2013

|   | Mean     | Median      | Min               | Max     | Data source   |
|---|----------|-------------|-------------------|---------|---|
| Climate variables   |          |             |                   |         |   |
| Period 1: Avg Aug mean temp (°C)                                  | 10.7     | 10.2        | 6.3               | 17.3    | NoRWeST Stream Temperature Model ( <a href="http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/boise/AWAE/projects/NorWeST.html">http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/boise/AWAE/projects/NorWeST.html</a> , accessed Feb 2014)                                   |
| Period 2: Avg Aug mean temp (°C)                                  | 11.7     | 11.0        | 7.1               | 18.1    |   |
| Period 1: Avg May snowpack (cm)                                   | 26.3     | 26.9        | 0                 | 50.4    | SNOTEL Data ( <a href="http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snow/html">http://www.wcc.nrcs.usda.gov/snow/html</a> , accessed Feb 2014)  |
| Period 2: Avg May snowpack (cm)                                   | 36.1     | 34.3        | 6.8               | 71.8    |   |
| Watershed characteristics   |          |             |                   |         |   |
| Reach gradient (% Slope) over 1 km                                | 0.06     | 0.04        | 0.00              | 0.40    | NHD Plus dataset derived for stream segments from 30 m DEMs ( <a href="http://www.horizon-systems.com/nhdplus/NHDPlusV2_home.php">http://www.horizon-systems.com/nhdplus/NHDPlusV2_home.php</a> , accessed February 2012) |
| Drainage area above site (km <sup>2</sup> )                       | 110.6    | 32.0        | 1.2               | 5,129.8 | NHD Plus dataset derived for stream segments from 30-m DEMs ( <a href="http://www.horizon-systems.com/nhdplus/NHDPlusV2_home.php">http://www.horizon-systems.com/nhdplus/NHDPlusV2_home.php</a> , accessed February 2012) |
| Period 1: % Canopy cover  | 64.2     | 71.4        | 0.4               | 98.4    | National Landcover Dataset (NLCD) 1992 and NLCD 2011 ( <a href="http://www.mrlc.gov/nlcd2001.php.html">http://www.mrlc.gov/nlcd2001.php.html</a> , accessed February 2012)  |
| Period 2: % Canopy cover  | 61.4     | 68.5        | 0.4               | 95.7    |   |
| Disturbance   |          |             |                   |         |   |
| Period 1: Road density (km road/km <sup>2</sup> watershed area)   | 0.9      | 0.5         | 0.0               | 18.1    | <a href="http://data.fs.usda.gov/geodata/">http://data.fs.usda.gov/geodata/</a>   |
| Period 2: Road density (km road/km <sup>2</sup> watershed area)   | 0.9      | 0.5         | 0.0               | 18.1    |   |
| % sites with moderate or high severity fire between 1993 and 2013 | 16.4%    |             |                   |         | Bitterroot National Forest (BNF) 2001 and Unpublished BNF GIS datasets  |
| No of sites with downstream barriers                              | Trout 26 | Sculpin 135 | Longnose dace 161 |         | Field assessments in 2011–2013  |

at a site. When slimy sculpin and longnose dace were detected at a site, we generally captured at least five individuals at the site suggesting benthic fish were established at the site and not transiting between sites.

Before fitting the occupancy models, we generated a correlation matrix in R version 3.1.2 (Core Team, 2014) to identify and exclude highly correlated covariates ( $r > .6$ ) that could have caused problems with multicollinearity (Dormann et al., 2013). We also standardized covariates to facilitate parameter estimation and interpretation (Harrell, Lee, Califf, Pryor, & Rosati, 1984).

We modeled initial site occupancy, site extirpation, and site colonization using dynamic occupancy methods that account for imperfect detection probability developed by MacKenzie et al. (2003). A maximum likelihood modeling procedure relies on detection history data to estimate detection probability ( $p$ ), initial occupancy ( $\psi$ ), extirpation ( $\epsilon$ ), and colonization ( $\gamma$ ; MacKenzie et al., 2003). Where  $p$  is a matrix of detection probabilities,  $\psi$  is a vector of site occupancy probabilities for the first primary sampling period, and  $\epsilon$  and  $\gamma$  are matrices of the conditional extirpation

and colonization probabilities. Changes in occupancy may occur between periods when occupied sites become unoccupied (site extirpation) or when unoccupied sites are occupied (site colonization). The dynamic site occupancy is a Markovian process; site extirpation and colonization at time  $t + 1$  is dependent upon initial occupancy at time  $t$ .

We followed the model structure described by Popescu et al. (2012); the occurrence state of the study species at each site ( $i$ ) in time period ( $j$ ),  $z(i, j)$ , is thus binary and can be modeled as a Bernoulli random variable for the first period such that

$$z_i \sim \text{Bernoulli}(\psi_i),$$

where  $\psi_i$  is the probability of a site being initially occupied. The change in occupancy is described by

$$z(i, t) | z(i, t-1) \sim \text{Bernoulli},$$

$$\{z(i, t-1)(1 - \epsilon_{i,t-1}) + [1 - z(i, t-1)]\gamma_{i,t-1}\},$$

where  $\varepsilon_{i,t-1}$  and  $\gamma_{i,t-1}$  are the site- and time-specific probabilities of local extinction and colonization, respectively. The observation process is conditional upon the state of the site and is modeled as

$$y(i, t) | z(i, t) \sim \text{Bernoulli}[z(i, t)p_t].$$

Thus, the observed “presence/absence” data ( $y_{ijt}$ ) confound the true distribution (represented by  $z_{ijt}$ ) and the detection process (represented by detection probability,  $p$ ; Royle & Kery, 2007).

We used the Program MARK (White & Burnham, 1999) with species capture histories derived from multiple site visits within the two periods, 1993–1995 and 2011–2013. Capture histories for each species were constructed as encounter history vectors with fish detection (1), non-detection (0), or not surveyed (.) similar to mark-recapture studies (e.g.,  $X_{ijt}$ ; where  $X_{ijt}$  denotes the observed fish species occurrence status at visit  $j$  during period  $t$  to site  $i$ ). Thus, the encounter history for a species at a site for which there were six overall sampling efforts might be denoted as 001.10. We expected misidentifications (false positives or false negatives) to be rare because the four study species are markedly different in appearance with slimy sculpin and longnose dace being the only benthic fish of their respective families within the basin. All species have well-known and easily identified distinguishing morphometric characteristics. These data were collected by trained field biologists with years of experience identifying fish in the basin. In addition, presence was determined by more than five individuals so a single or low level of misidentification should not influence the dataset.

Closure (or no occupancy state change) is required for the within period estimates of probability of detection ( $p$ ) to accurately estimate occupancy, colonization and extirpation. We assessed the assumption of no occupancy state change (i.e., closure) within our time periods of 3 years using a staggered arrivals and departures approach described by Kendall, Hines, Nichols, and Grant (2013). For the within period estimates probability of detection ( $p$ ), each site could have been visited up to six times, with 77% of the sites receiving at least two visits in period 1 and 78% of the sites receiving at least two visits in period 2.

We used a stepped approach to build models, first selecting the most supported detection probability model, then building models which incorporated detection efficiency to estimate initial site occupancy, extirpation, and finally colonization in consecutive order. First naive estimates for probability of detection were examined as a time varying function using the detection data to examine how different detection was within and across periods. Then we modeled a probability of detection function with the covariates for period, crew, gear type, and drainage area. We explored all possible combinations of these probability of detection covariates in competing models to determine those that best describe the probability of detection across sites (based on maximum likelihood estimates and Akaike information criterion [AIC] Arnold, 2010; Burnham & Anderson, 2002). We examined the naive estimates with the modeled estimates from our probability of detection function. Once the probability of detection function was parameterized, initial occupancy estimates for the first

period (1993–1995) were parameterized with the habitat covariates. We then estimated the extirpation and colonization probabilities that determined whether a species occurred at sites during the second sampling period, and whether those estimates were significantly different from zero. We considered all models within 2 AIC units of the top model, but disregarded uninformative parameters that were not statistically significant (see Supplemental Materials S2 for full model results). In the case where all other models were 2 AIC units or greater from the top model, we reported the second most supported model for comparison.

We validated the performance of top models by calculating the within-sample predictive performance of each model using a bootstrapped (1,000 times) formulation of area under the curve of the receiver operator characteristic plot (AUC; Fielding & Bell, 1997) and classification accuracy as performance metrics. AUC describes the ability of the model to discriminate between occupancy states (presence or absence), where an AUC value of 0.5 is no better than a random prediction and 1.0 indicates perfect discrimination. For cross-validation of the dynamic occupancy model, we compared model predictions for the second time period with a known occupancy state. Because one assumes a known occupancy state for cross-validation, we used sites surveyed during the second period (2011–2013) with at least three visits. This resulted in a cross-validation dataset of 92 sites in period 2 (2011–2013). Any three visits would result in a near perfect ( $p > .98$ ) cumulative detection for all species.

Using the top occupancy models, we investigated how different scenarios of fragmentation may affect species distribution shifts. The models were used to predict first period (1993–1995) and second period (2011–2013) site occupancy under three scenarios (a) current conditions as parameterized in our top models, (b) if all barriers were ignored simulating free dispersal, and (c) if anthropogenic barriers were removed. We used a 1,000 time bootstrap sample of posterior distributions for the predictions. By ignoring all barriers, we estimated the influence of barriers within the model and how ignoring barriers in the modeling procedure might overestimate current distributions (and a species capacity to move upstream to thermal refuge sites). By removing anthropogenic barriers from the model, we explored the influence barrier management (either removal or facilitated dispersal) might have on species distributions.

### 3 | RESULTS

The 280 sample sites spanned a wide range of environmental conditions (Table 1). Between the two sample periods, a large portion of the basin experienced wildfires (Figure 1). In the initial period only 37 sites had burned in the two decades before sampling but in the later time period (2011–2013) 161 sites of the 280 sample sites were within wildfire perimeters. Three of the four species were distributed throughout streams in the river basin during the initial survey period (bull trout, cutthroat trout, and slimy sculpin), whereas longnose dace were generally detected along the main stem of the Bitterroot

**TABLE 2** Detection probabilities for sampling events 1 ( $p_1$ ), event 2 ( $p_2$ ) ... and event 5 ( $p_5$ ) for four study species during the two closed periods (1993–1995, 2011–2013) based on naive (no covariates) time varying models. The sixth sampling event ( $p_6$ ) is not presented because detection probabilities are inestimable for that event. Standard errors are in parentheses

|                           | Period 1 (1993–1995) |             |             |             |             | Period 2 (2011–2013) |             |             |             |             |
|---------------------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|----------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|                           | $p_1$                | $p_2$       | $p_3$       | $p_4$       | $p_5$       | $p_1$                | $p_2$       | $p_3$       | $p_4$       | $p_5$       |
| Bull trout                | Est (SE)             | 0.86 (0.03) | 0.77 (0.03) | 0.81 (0.06) | 0.81 (0.04) | 0.77 (0.08)          | 0.71 (0.07) | 0.64 (0.06) | 0.85 (0.11) | 0.78 (0.09) |
| Westslope cutthroat trout | Est (SE)             | 0.94 (0.01) | 0.87 (0.02) | 0.89 (0.01) | 0.87 (0.04) | 0.97 (0.04)          | 0.92 (0.02) | 0.85 (0.04) | 0.97 (0.05) | 0.93 (0.04) |
| Slimy sculpin             | Est (SE)             | 0.86 (0.05) | 0.84 (0.04) | 0.80 (0.05) | 0.82 (0.03) | 0.88 (0.04)          | 0.88 (0.09) | 0.87 (0.08) | 0.90 (0.07) | 0.89 (0.08) |
| Longnose dace             | Est (SE)             | 0.87 (0.11) | 0.91 (0.09) | 0.84 (0.10) | 0.92 (0.09) | 0.94 (0.05)          | 0.93 (0.08) | 0.89 (0.07) | 0.93 (0.07) | 0.88 (0.06) |

**TABLE 3** Dynamic occupancy models for fish species sampled at 280 sites across a riverscape over two sampling periods. The statistics are the number of parameters,  $K$ ; change in Akaike's information criterion,  $\Delta AIC$ ; AIC weight,  $w$ ; and the area under the curve (AUC) for each most supported model

| Model   | $K$ | $\Delta AIC$ | $w$  | AUC  |
|---|-----|--------------|------|------|
| <b>Bull Trout<sub>1</sub></b>   |     |              |      |      |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Slope, Temp., Canopy Cover) $\epsilon$ (Slope, Temp.) $\gamma$ (Temp.)   | 18  | 0.00         | 0.15 | 0.77 |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Slope, Temp., Canopy Cover) $\epsilon$ (Slope, Temp.) $\gamma$ (Temp., Burn Severity)  | 19  | 0.20         | 0.14 |      |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Slope, Temp., Canopy Cover) $\epsilon$ (Slope, Temp.) $\gamma$ (Temp., Canopy Cover)   | 19  | 0.28         | 0.13 |      |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Slope, Temp., Canopy Cover) $\epsilon$ (Slope, Temp.) $\gamma$ (Temp., Road Density)   | 19  | 1.50         | 0.07 |      |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Slope, Temp., Canopy Cover) $\epsilon$ (Slope, Temp.) $\gamma$ (Temp., Basin Size)   | 19  | 1.58         | 0.07 |      |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Slope, Temp., Canopy Cover) $\epsilon$ (Slope, Temp.) $\gamma$ (Temp., Barrier)  | 19  | 1.87         | 0.06 |      |
| <sup>1</sup> All bull trout models include time varying probability of detection ( $p_1$ (Time) $p_2$ (Time))   |     |              |      |      |
| <b>Westslope Cutthroat Trout<sub>2</sub></b>  |     |              |      |      |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Slope, Temp.) $\epsilon$ (.) $\gamma$ (Barrier)  | 20  | 0.00         | 0.28 | 0.72 |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Slope, Temp.) $\epsilon$ (.) $\gamma$ (Barrier, Temp.)   | 21  | 1.34         | 0.14 |      |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Slope, Temp.) $\epsilon$ (.) $\gamma$ (Barrier, Slope)   | 21  | 1.41         | 0.14 |      |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Slope, Temp.) $\epsilon$ (.) $\gamma$ (.)  | 20  | 1.49         | 0.13 |      |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Slope, Temp.) $\epsilon$ (.) $\gamma$ (Barrier, Canopy Cover)  | 21  | 1.93         | 0.11 |      |
| <sup>2</sup> All westslope cutthroat trout models include time varying probability of detection and basin size covariate ( $p_1$ (Time, Basin Size) $p_2$ (Time, Basin Size)) |     |              |      |      |
| <b>Slimy Sculpin<sub>3</sub></b>  |     |              |      |      |
| $\psi$ (Barrier) $\epsilon$ (Temp., Burn Severity) $\gamma$ (Barrier)   | 8   | 0.00         | 0.99 | 0.89 |
| $\psi$ (Barrier) $\epsilon$ (Temp., Burn Severity) $\gamma$ (Burn Severity)   | 8   | 11.01        | 0.01 |      |
| <b>Longnose Dace<sub>3</sub></b>  |     |              |      |      |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Temp.) $\epsilon$ (Temp.) $\gamma$ (Barrier, Temp.)  | 9   | 0.00         | 0.96 | 0.70 |
| $\psi$ (Barrier, Temp.) $\epsilon$ (Temp.) $\gamma$ (Barrier)   | 8   | 11.56        | 0.02 |      |
| <sup>3</sup> All models for slimy sculpin and longnose dace include constant probability of detection ( $p_1$ (.) $p_2$ (.))  |     |              |      |      |

Abbreviations:  $\gamma$ , colonization probability;  $\epsilon$ , extirpation probability;  $\psi$ , initial occupancy probability;  $p_1$ , probability of detection, period 1 (1993–1995);  $p_2$ , probability of detection, period 2 (2011–2013).



**TABLE 4** Parameter estimates of covariates in the top models for initial site occupancy, extirpation probability, and colonization probability of four fish species throughout a river network (standard error estimates are in parentheses). Non-significant covariates are left blank. Where  $\psi$  indicates initial occupancy probability,  $\varepsilon$  indicates extirpation probability, and  $\gamma$  represents colonization probability

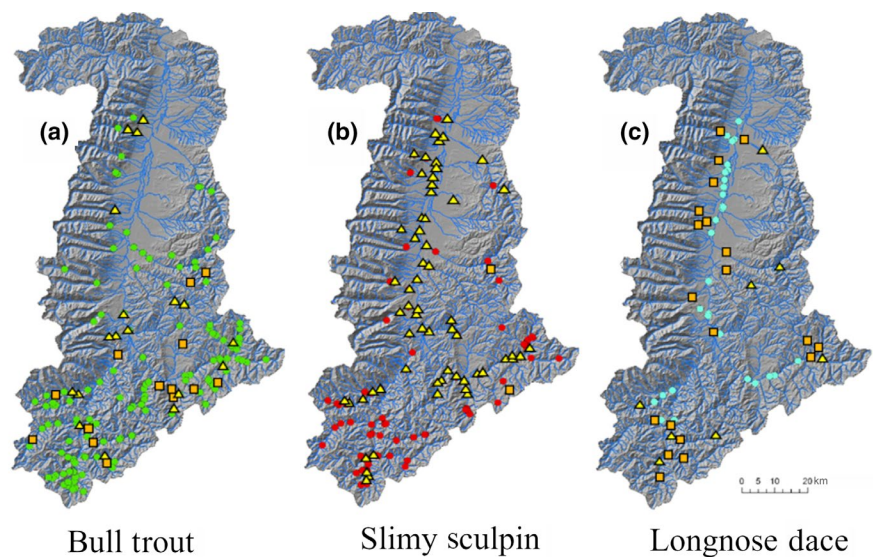
| Species                   | Parameter     | Intercept    | Barrier      | Stream slope | Stream temperature | Burn severity | Canopy cover |
|---------------------------|---------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Bull trout                | $\psi$        | 0.46 (0.15)  | -0.60 (0.18) | -0.46 (0.18) | -0.88 (0.21)       |               | 0.45 (0.17)  |
|                           | $\varepsilon$ | -1.55 (0.28) |              | 0.70 (0.25)  | 1.36 (0.38)        |               |              |
|                           | $\gamma$      | -1.94 (0.17) |              |              | -0.69 (0.31)       |               |              |
| Westslope cutthroat trout | $\psi$        | 3.33 (0.41)  | -0.49 (0.15) | -0.54 (0.29) | -1.19 (0.37)       |               |              |
|                           | $\varepsilon$ | -4.39 (0.62) |              |              |                    |               |              |
|                           | $\gamma$      | -1.34 (0.31) | -0.94 (0.21) |              |                    |               |              |
| Slimy sculpin             | $\psi$        | -0.29 (0.24) | -2.35 (0.24) |              |                    |               |              |
|                           | $\varepsilon$ | 0.07 (0.22)  |              |              | 1.26 (0.24)        | 0.50 (0.17)   |              |
|                           | $\gamma$      | -1.21 (1.09) | -2.21 (0.91) |              |                    |               |              |
| Longnose dace             | $\psi$        | -3.91 (0.55) | -1.27 (0.39) |              | 1.86 (0.35)        |               |              |
|                           | $\varepsilon$ | 0.68 (1.05)  |              |              | -3.31 (1.69)       |               |              |
|                           | $\gamma$      | -1.38 (0.28) | -1.06 (0.54) |              | 1.30 (0.38)        |               |              |

**TABLE 5** Estimates of occupancy, extirpation, and colonization probabilities for four fish species at 280 sample sites in the detection function from the top model from Table 3

|                           | First period occupancy |      | Extirpation |      | Colonization |      | Second period occupancy <sup>a</sup> |      |
|---------------------------|------------------------|------|-------------|------|--------------|------|--------------------------------------|------|
|                           | Est.                   | SE   | Est.        | SE   | Est.         | SE   | Est.                                 | SE   |
| Bull trout                | 0.61                   | 0.04 | 0.18        | 0.04 | 0.12         | 0.04 | 0.55                                 | 0.04 |
| Westslope cutthroat trout | 0.97                   | 0.01 | 0.01        | 0.01 | 0.21         | 0.15 | 0.96                                 | 0.17 |
| Slimy sculpin             | 0.43                   | 0.06 | 0.57        | 0.06 | 0.02         | 0.02 | 0.19                                 | 0.04 |
| Longnose dace             | 0.19                   | 0.02 | 0.06        | 0.02 | 0.06         | 0.06 | 0.20                                 | 0.05 |

<sup>a</sup>Second period occupancy rate is derived from initial occupancy, extirpation, and colonization.

**FIGURE 3** Raw observations for initially occupied sites where species persisted from 1993–1995 to 2011–2013 for (a) bull trout (green circles), (b) slimy sculpin (red circles), and (c) longnose dace (blue circles). Observed site extirpation (yellow triangles) and site colonization (orange squares) are also depicted



River and lower reaches of tributaries (Figure 2). Each of the four species had relatively high detection probabilities (slimy sculpin  $p \geq .80$ , longnose dace  $p \geq .84$ , westslope cutthroat trout  $p \geq .80$ , and bull trout  $p \geq .64$ ) with the sampling protocol that was used. Naive

detection probabilities by time were similar within sampling periods and between time periods among species (Table 2), highlighting that differences in detection probabilities were not driving the results in the dynamic occupancy models. In addition, conditional entry and

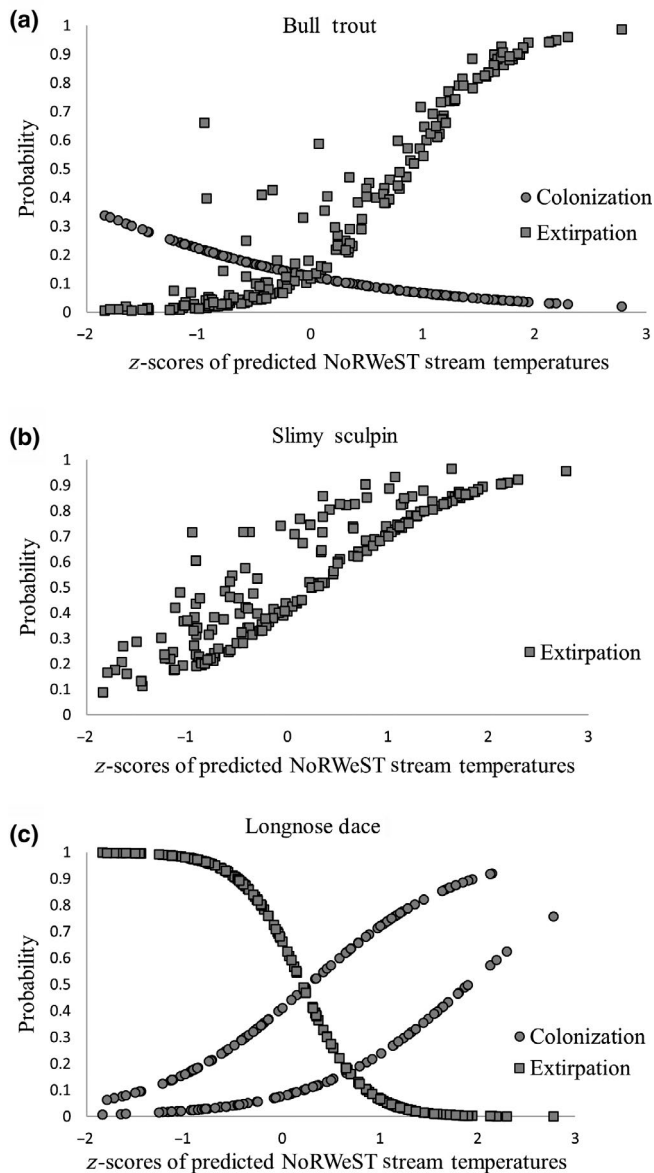
departure probabilities within our first time period (1993–1995) and within our defined second time period (2011–2013) were very low ( $<0.10$ ) which supported our assumption of closure.

The covariates in the top models associated with probability of detection and initial occupancy varied by species, and all top models were well supported and made accurate predictions of second period occupancy (AUC 0.70–0.89; Table 3). Bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout had multiple models that fell within two AIC, but these models were similarly structured. The best models for bull trout and westslope cutthroat trout had time varying probabilities

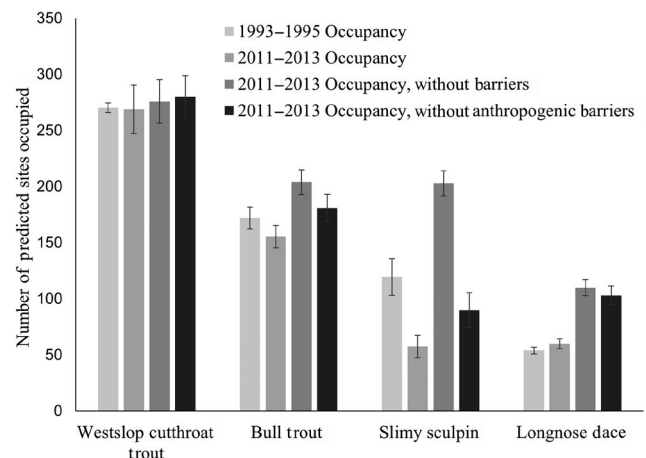
of detection; cutthroat trout detection probabilities were also influenced by drainage area. Slimy sculpin and longnose dace had strongly supported top models. The second most supported model was  $\Delta AIC$  11.01 for slimy sculpin and  $\Delta AIC$  11.56 for longnose dace from the top model. Detection probabilities for slimy sculpin and longnose dace were constant over time and were not influenced by habitat covariates or sampling gear or field crew. Initial site occupancy ( $\psi$ ) of the two trout species was negatively associated with downstream barriers, and that were the warmest or highest gradient (steepest), with bull trout also positively associated with canopy cover. Slimy sculpin and longnose dace initial site occupancy was also negatively associated with downstream barriers (Table 4).

The different species had varying results in changes in occupancy during the study period. Bull trout site occupancy was estimated to have declined by 9.2% (95% confidence interval [CI] 8.3%–10.1%), from 200 sites in 53 streams in the initial period to 181 sites in 51 streams more recently (Table 5; Figure 3). Slimy sculpin estimated site occupancy declined by 48.0% (CI 42.0%–54.0%) between the two time periods, from 146 sites in 41 streams initially to 56 sites in 30 streams during the later survey period. Westslope cutthroat trout showed no significant change in site occupancy between time periods. Longnose dace was the only species that was observed to increase site occupancy during the study (42 sites in 24 streams during the first period, increasing to 55 sites in 26 streams during the second period).

Significant covariates describing site extirpation and colonization also varied among species. Site extirpation probabilities ( $\epsilon$ ) were positively associated with warmer stream temperatures for bull trout, warmer temperatures and wildfire occurrence for slimy sculpin, and cooler temperatures for longnose dace (Tables 3 and 4). Extirpation probability for westslope cutthroat trout was very low over this time period. Site colonization probabilities ( $\gamma$ ) among the four species were consistently affected by temperature and barriers, although several other factors appeared in closely competing models for



**FIGURE 4** Modeled probabilities of site extirpation and site colonization between sampling periods over a 20 year interval for (a) bull trout, (b) slimy sculpin, and (c) longnose dace. Colonization for slimy sculpin was rare. The bifurcation in modeled colonization probabilities for longnose dace is a result of landscape barriers strongly influencing colonization probabilities. Probabilities are illustrated across standardized z-score values for the range of mean August stream temperature in the 2011–2013 dataset



**FIGURE 5** Predicted sites occupied in the second time period (2011–2013) with barriers, without barriers and without anthropogenic barriers with 95% confidence intervals based on 1,000 iteration bootstrapping. Landscape barriers impact weak-swimming fishes more so than strong-swimming fishes

the two trout species (Table 3). Parameter estimates from the top models reinforce the important roles that stream temperature and barriers played in site occupancy and turnover (Table 4). Whereas barriers had a consistently negative effect on species occurrence and colonization, temperature effects varied by species. Bull trout and slimy sculpin showed significant higher extirpation probabilities and lower colonization probabilities for bull trout only at warmer sites and slimy sculpin had no measurable colonization while longnose dace demonstrated the opposite trend (Figure 4; Figures S2 and S3). Bull trout extirpation and colonization probabilities intersected at a mean temperature z-score of 0.05, which translated to a mean August temperature of 12.1°C. Bull trout and slimy sculpin had 50% extirpation probabilities at z-scores of 0.79 and 0.23, which translated to mean August temperatures of 12.8°C and 11.5°C, respectively. Slimy sculpin extirpation probabilities were high overall and much higher in higher order, warmer streams and streams that had moderate to severe wildfires between time periods (Figure 4). Westslope cutthroat trout did not have any significant temperature relationships.

Barrier removal scenarios suggested different levels of species sensitivity (Figure 5). Removal of all barriers indicated slimy sculpin could occupy a much broader set of sites compared to those recently occupied in the 2011–2013 period. Even if only anthropogenic barriers were addressed and natural barriers remained, a substantial increase of 22% in the number of sites occupied by sculpin appeared possible. Most of the barriers influencing longnose dace colonization between time periods were anthropogenic barriers, but if these structures were passable it was estimated that site occupancy could increase by 80%. Given the broad initial distribution of the two trout species, their potential site occupancy was less affected by barrier removal. Bull trout sites occupied might increase by 16% with anthropogenic barrier removal, whereas cutthroat trout gains were estimated to be negligible.

## 4 | DISCUSSION

Our results highlight the unique responses that individual species exhibit within a diverse riverscape over two decades. Depending on the species, their distributions contracted, expanded, or remained constant, with specific response emerging from the interplay among species traits, initial distributions, fluvial access to new habitats, and location (e.g., closeness to thermal threshold). The two trout species that were initially distributed throughout the network, including the upper, colder landscape showed little change, although small contractions in warmer habitats were observed for bull trout. The vagility of these species enabled habitat tracking and likely enhanced their resilience to the extensive wildfires that occurred between the first period (1993–1995) and second period of the study (2011–2013). Trends for the two smaller species appeared to be on diverging trajectories and differed from that of the trout species. Slimy sculpin exhibited a surprising loss in occupancy of the 20 years, which seemed to be driven by climate change and landscape

resistance. Longnose dace with a preference for warmer temperatures, was mostly distributed in the lowest elevation and warmest stream sites in and along the Bitterroot River that had little exposure to wildfires. Longnose dace did initially occupy some upper elevation sites ( $n = 6$ ) but this was generally by low numbers of fish (5–10 or 0.01–0.1 fish/m) and these sites were surrounded by unoccupied sites suggesting these fish were at low densities and patchy at these higher elevations. Dace were extirpated at these sites by the second period. Some sites did have fire present but given the few number of sites it is difficult to assess whether these extirpations were stochastic events or driven by environmental conditions. Wildfires are common to landscapes in western North America where these four species evolved, but instream habitats are often degraded for several years postfire such that local temporary refuges may be periodically necessary, as well as dispersal or recolonization from nearby refuges or populations may be needed. Recolonization of some sites could eventually occur but the lower vagility of sculpin and dace likely make it a longer process than is likely for trout species which often rebound to prefire abundances within a few years after fires (reviewed in Bixby et al., 2015).

Conservation concerns are likely to vary by species during the remainder of the century. Climate change within this region is projected to continue along trends that have been ongoing for several decades, with additional stream temperature increases of 1–2°C, summer flow declines of 20%–40%, and more frequent wildfires over the course of the 21st century (e.g., Isaak, Wenger, Peterson, et al., 2017; Leppi et al., 2012; Westerling, Hidalgo, Cayan, & Swetnam, 2006). Longnose dace seem poised to emerge as a possible climate winner in the future but their colonization into new habitats may be compromised by habitat fragmentation in some areas, as we detected significant negative effects of anthropogenic barriers on colonization probabilities in currently suitable reaches in the Bitterroot valley. The effect of small barriers negatively impacting longnose dace movement is consistent with work highlighting their inability to pass stream barriers (Ficke, 2015; Ficke & Myrick, 2019). Future predatory invaders that prefer warmer temperatures and riverine habitats may also pose a risk to longnose dace and other small-bodied members of the aquatic community. For example, a nonnative brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) population has recently been expanding in the Bitterroot River (Al-Chokhachy et al., 2016), and smallmouth bass (*Micropterus dolomieu*) are undergoing a regional expansion and prefer the same warmer, low velocity habitats that longnose dace inhabit (Rubenson & Olden, 2019). Those warmer habitats may also be vulnerable to non-predatory species invasions that alter aquatic ecosystems in deleterious ways through various trophic pathways (e.g., Messenger & Olden, 2018). The lack of change in westslope cutthroat trout distributions we observed was similar to the results of an earlier study with the Yellowstone cutthroat trout (*O. clarki bouvieri*) subspecies which resampled historical sites throughout a river network (Meyer, Schill, Elle, & Schrader, 2003). Given the historical unknown levels of introgression with congeneric rainbow trout, our analysis could not detect any potential expansion of low levels of introgression with rainbow

trout as seen in other Montana river basins in Montana (Boyer, Muhlfeld, & Allendorf, 2008; Muhlfeld et al., 2014). Even though historical changes in westslope cutthroat trout did not occur in this study, there have been projections for future climate-related range contractions for westslope cutthroat trout in this region (Isaak et al., 2015; Williams, Haak, Neville, & Colyer, 2009) but larger changes may be necessary for these to manifest.

The conservation needs of the two declining species, bull trout and slimy sculpin, are more challenging. For bull trout, our results were similar to previous descriptions of thermal preferences being  $<12^{\circ}\text{C}$  (Isaak et al., 2016) and reinforce previous trend assessments and the role that climate change appears to be playing in slow ongoing, patchy declines throughout this basin and the broader region (Al-Chokhachy et al., 2016; Eby et al., 2014). Our ability to estimate thermal constraints based on extirpation and colonization probabilities suggests that site turnover is equal at  $12.1^{\circ}\text{C}$ . However, the particularly cold thermal niche of bull trout restricts most of their site occurrences and reproductive areas to headwater habitats where climate velocities are slower (Isaak et al., 2016). Motivated by these factors, previous research developed precise species distribution models to forecast the locations of streams that may act as long-term climate refugia for populations of this species (Isaak et al., 2015; Young et al., 2016). Several of these predicted refugia occur within the Bitterroot watershed and may serve as the focus of conservation efforts to minimize the loss of life history diversity (Nyce, Eby, Clancy, Painter, & Leary, 2013), reduce invasions by nonnative competitors (Wilcox et al., 2018), and improve habitat quality.

The magnitude of slimy sculpin declines during the study was most surprising and noteworthy. These losses are not isolated to this basin, as Adams et al. (2015) detected temperature-dependent changes in distributions occurring from  $13^{\circ}\text{C}$  to  $16^{\circ}\text{C}$  in other basins in Montana with warming stream temperatures that were not exposed to wildfire. We observed lower mean August temperatures ( $11.8^{\circ}\text{C}$ ) associated with 50% extirpation probability, yet there is likely a difference between mean estimates of temperature and direct measures of temperature. Moreover, relatively little is known about the population dynamics and spatial ecology of this species due to a lack of historical monitoring in many areas throughout its range. So little attention has been focused on sculpin species in general that their phylogeography in western North America is currently undergoing a revision (M. K. Young, personal communication, November 2013) and recent studies have revealed cryptic biodiversity that remains underappreciated (Adams & Schmetterling, 2007; LeMoine et al., 2014; Young, McKelvey, Pilgrim, & Schwartz, 2013). The direct causes of decline are uncertain, even though the association with stream temperature is strong, there could be additional considerations such as species interactions (Baltz, Moyle, & Knight, 1982). Slimy sculpin populations warrant broader monitoring to understand future population trajectories, a broader review of their status, their potential cause of declines, and a formal consideration into potential conservation interventions, such as improving passage at barriers for weak-swimming fish.

The range of distributional responses and potential vulnerabilities among the four study species was notable but likely provides an underestimate of changes in aquatic biodiversity of the broader riverscape. Many additional nongame fish (in cyprinidae or catostomidae families) often have little information on their occurrence or abundance, but given their morphology, they are likely also impacted by barriers limiting colonization upstream. As we work to understand the broader biodiversity changes from macroinvertebrates, mussels, amphibians and the full assemblage of fishes, surveys that efficiently capture the environmental DNA of organisms transported downstream through river networks (Deiner, Fronhofer, Mächler, Walser, & Altermatt, 2016) could help develop more comprehensive information. These data could then be used to screen for vulnerable species and to identify locally important biodiversity hotspots that could guide conservation investments (Kalinkat et al., 2017).

Even though the importance of addressing barriers to dispersal has been described for species climate resilience (Parmesan et al., 1999) and associated with climate vulnerability of freshwater fishes (Comte & Grenouillet, 2013; Gibson-Reinemer, Rahel, Albeke, & Fitzpatrick, 2017; Hari et al., 2006; Nyboer, Liang, & Chapman, 2019), our study is rare in its ability to estimate effects on barriers with the demonstration of how they may have already impacted small fish's ability to respond to changes in stream temperature. As biologists work to incorporate barriers into projections and planning (e.g., Pandit, Maitland, Pandit, Poesch, & Enders, 2017), detailed and species-specific inventories of barriers to movements of all freshwater organisms will be needed to complement species distribution information and inform future responses to climate change (Hari et al., 2006; Januchowsky-Hartley, Jezequel, & Tedesco, 2019). As our results illustrate, barriers are common even throughout a sparsely populated watershed such as the Bitterroot basin and appear to impact species ability to respond to changes in stream temperatures and wildfire disturbances. Although the deleterious effects of habitat fragmentation and the ease with which connectivity in dendritic river networks can be severed have long been recognized (e.g., Zwick, 1992), only recently has the pervasiveness of barrier features and their influence on climate vulnerability been appreciated (e.g., Gibson-Reinemer et al., 2017; Januchowsky-Hartley et al., 2019; Radinger et al., 2017; Radinger, Holker, Horky, Slavik, & Wolter, 2018). Most commonly available information about barrier locations is limited to summaries of the largest anthropogenic features such as dams and major water diversions found in national dam inventories. Passage considerations at many of those larger barriers are focused on strong-swimming fish such as salmonids, and are likely ineffective for most other species (Birnie-Gauvin, Franklin, Wilkes, & Aarestrup, 2019; Januchowsky-Hartley et al., 2019). Information about the locations of smaller anthropogenic barriers such as check dams for small irrigation diversions are often held by local water resource agencies, which may or may not be publicly available for use in research, and is often lacking with regards to aquatic organism passage details. Similarly with regards to



natural barriers, usually only the most prominent features like waterfalls on larger rivers are well catalogued despite being common in smaller mountain headwater streams where reaches with steep slopes also create numerous flow velocity barriers for aquatic organisms. Identifying these barriers and including them in distribution modeling is key for better assessing risks to individual species and community integrity while improving conservation planning to increase riverscape resilience (Januchowsky-Hartley et al., 2019).

Despite significant challenges, numerous actions could be taken that would improve the resilience of aquatic communities to environmental change. Habitat restoration measures designed to regain the attributes of more natural thermal or hydrologic regimes where alterations are significant could offset many past and future effects of climate change (e.g., Justice, White, McCullough, Graves, & Blanchard, 2017). Barrier removal, or provision of better fish passage facilities, is an obvious measure. Significant progress has been made on this front for cold-water species in headwater tributaries where road crossings are sometimes problematic but smaller-bodied fish have received less attention. Attempts to improve fluvial connectivity, however, must also be weighed against possible risks associated with facilitating the movements of invasive species, predators, or diseases (Fausch, Rieman, Dunham, Young, & Peterson, 2009). Some considerations may be assisted migration via human-mediated transfer of species over upstream barriers into suitable habitats or selective passage to promote native species passage and inhibit non-native fish (Rahel & McLaughlin, 2018). Suppression of undesired and invasive species is another tactic but one that is notoriously difficult and has been met with mixed success (e.g., Britton, Gozlam, & Copp, 2011; Meronek et al., 1996).

## 5 | CONCLUSION

By revisiting hundreds of historical sites across a complex riverscape, this study establishes important empirical benchmarks for future comparisons and hints at the breadth of ecological responses occurring in aquatic communities subject to climate change and related disturbances. It appears that communities are not simply shifting *en masse* to track suitable habitats but are being disrupted by the varying degrees of landscape resistance that community members experience. Two smaller-bodied, less vagile species demonstrated responses that were distinct from larger-bodied, cold-water salmonid species that inhabit different portions of the same river network. This study highlights that although salmonid species have been the primary focus of the literature concerning climate vulnerability in North America (e.g., Eby et al., 2014; Wenger et al., 2011), they were not the most vulnerable species in this analysis. Better information is needed to understand the distribution, habitat requirements, mobility, and dispersal capabilities of many lesser-known species so that changes underway in freshwater ecosystems are described more comprehensively and efficient conservation strategies can be designed accordingly. An incomplete knowledge of the locations and extent of anthropogenic and natural barriers to aquatic organism

movements within riverscapes could undermine those conservation efforts by preventing species from tracking shifts in suitable habitats. Local barrier inventories may be useful for identifying where constraints are most likely to occur and prioritizing efforts to improve aquatic organism passage or assisted migrations in conjunction with habitat improvement efforts that enhance community resilience. Concerted efforts will be required to conserve biodiversity within freshwater environments this century as anthropogenic climate change continues for the foreseeable future.

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## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available in the supplementary material of this article or can be made available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

## ORCID

Michael T. LeMoine  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3605-7335>

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## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information may be found online in the Supporting Information section.

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